

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 184—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 9, 1892.

PRICE TWOPENCE

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER V. MATCH-MAKING.

WHILE the Lady of the Manor of Bryans was hearing her vassal's confessions on life and art, and giving her encouragement, with quaint little bits of good advice, to ambitions she did not in the least realise or understand—for even in that moonlit loneliness Geoffrey was nervously careful that she should guess nothing of his real thoughts—Miss Fanny Latimer and Mr. Otto Nugent were carrying on a much more practical conversation.

He looked after Poppy, as she led away her willing captive towards the orchard, with a slight, interested smile; pulled his moustache and muttered under his breath:

"Lucky painter!"

"Poor man! Just like Poppy," said her aunt. "She wants to comfort him for being refused about the boat. Now tell me, Otto—there are so many things I want to know——"

"First, do you want to know what I think of your niece? I have hardly seen her since she grew up, you know."

"Well, you must admire her, so say what you like."

"I do admire her without compulsion. I think she is extremely handsome—much handsomer than I expected her to be. Almost a beauty."

"Some people think quite," said Miss Latimer.

"No doubt. The unfortunate painter, for instance."

"He is nobody," she said, with a little impatience. "Don't say that kind of thing please; it irritates me."

"But why not, dear Miss Latimer? He is an educated human being, and not a bad-looking fellow, and evidently rather a favourite. I really don't feel quite safe in describing him as nobody."

"He is nobody, Otto. Don't tease me. He is the younger son of a farmer at Sutton Bryans. His grandfather—I don't say his father, for these people think so much of themselves now—his grandfather would have touched his hat to any Latimer he met in the road. Poppy is nice to him because of all that. I hope the man has too much sense to misunderstand her."

"Very possibly. All you say is true and wise. But we live at the end of the nineteenth century, and the world is very much 'bouleversé,' and some people think that if a man has talent, or genius, or whatever he likes to call it, there need be no limit to his ambition. I quite understand the fair Porphyria's motive. She is not difficult to read. But she might be difficult to manage, in case she found out, as she probably will, the conquest she has made. That is a certainty, whether the man comes from Bryans or from New York. This afternoon, when I saw him first, I wondered what was the matter with him. He was sitting by the river with his face buried in his hands. When I spoke to him, he blushed like a girl. Poor chap, I dare say he does understand Miss Porphyria, and is none the happier for it. But she ought not, you know—no, she ought not to go away for long walks with him in the moonlight. It's not quite the thing for her, and cruel kindness to him, even if he is nobody."

Miss Latimer laughed, and then sighed.

"I can't tell her so."

"That I understand." He waited a moment, and went on very gravely: "You must forgive my plain speaking. I hope I don't presume too much on the friendship; but I feel very deeply interested."

Miss Latimer glanced at him, but without satisfaction, for not only was Otto Nugent's face at no time easily read, but he had just leant back into the shadow.

"Then I suppose," she said, "your mother has told you the fancy—the idea——"

"She took me a little way into her confidence. In fact, we held a family council on the subject—she, Alice, and I. I don't think they would have admitted me, you know, if they could have helped it. Ladies always think that men are so awkward—that a man behaves like a large stone in the midst of delicate machinery. But as we had to alter all our plans to come here, it was necessary, don't you see, to make me understand the necessity. Of course I understood my mother's pleasure in meeting you; but then I knew that she could meet you just as well in England, a little later, and I had arranged a rather different tour, because Herzheim is not a place I care for much. But when I was shown that with regard to Arthur—well, it was a case of now or never—I saw the reasonableness. My mother told me the very kind things you had said about him—and in short, of course, I could not stand in the way of such a possibility. They found me quite manageable, and anything but a stumbling-stone."

"I see," said Miss Latimer. "Well, I had no wish to spoil your tour, but it is some time now since the idea came into my head, and when your mother mentioned that Arthur was going back to India this autumn, I thought that if he and Poppy were to meet, it was a case, as you say, of now or never. Some people, I dare say, might call me a worldly old match-maker——"

"Not old certainly," said Otto, in his deliberate tones. Miss Latimer laughed. "Nor worldly," he went on. "Very much the contrary of worldly. So much so, that it seems to me the one objection of your plan. Every advantage, you see, is on your side. Arthur is a pleasing boy, with nice looks and a nice temper. There he ends, as far as I know him. To speak vulgarly, Miss Porphyria Latimer might

look a great deal higher. She might make a match as magnificent as her name."

"She might, but she never will," said Fanny Latimer with a faint sigh, which brought a corresponding faint smile to her companion's lips. "I should not feel so driven to make plans for Poppy, if she was like other girls. But you see I never feel sure of her. She takes people up in such an extraordinary way. She interests herself in people, no matter who they are, and seems quite to forget her own position. Now you or I would never find ourselves the least intimate with a person like this young Thorne, for instance. And look at Poppy!"

"But just now, when I expressed something of the sort, you told me there was nothing to be frightened at."

"So I did; yes, I meant it. She is nice to him, I really think, simply and solely because he comes from Bryans and paints badly. Oh no! He is perfectly safe, perfectly. But I mean that there you see Poppy's character. She might take a serious fancy to a person of that sort. There is not a scrap of worldliness about her. Worldliness! I might say self-respect—and yet that is not the right word either. Her relations must take pains, must arrange her life for her as best they can. I feel it more and more every day. And it seems to me that just a happy, simple marriage to somebody we all know—somebody who is sweet-tempered, and sensible, and charming, like dear Arthur, who will just influence her nicely and let her go her own way, is the thing I must aim at for Poppy. I want her to be happy. I think myself that happiness matters much more than money or titles. Poppy has money enough. If she marries a gentleman, and a good man, I shall be quite contented. There, Otto! I might have been talking to your mother. Please take that as a compliment."

She ended with a nervous little laugh.

"I do," said Otto. After a minute's silence, he went on: "Certainly no one could dare to call you worldly. I can't tell you how right and wise I think you. But your ideas are not English, you know."

"Indeed, they are, thoroughly English. What do you mean? Foreigners think of nothing but money. They arrange, of course, but it is all a matter of fortune. They don't study characters."

"I beg your pardon; they do. Alice knows a very charming French girl, with-

out much fortune, whose relations have refused two excellent matches for her because the men's characters did not quite please them."

"Oh, well, but of course—anything serious——"

"There was nothing serious. One was ill-tempered, the other was miserly. Now that girl, if she had had the chance, and if she had been English—French girls have more sense—would probably have fallen in love with one of those men, and would have been a miserable woman."

"She might have fallen in love with the ill-tempered one. Never with the miser."

Otto laughed.

"Well, after all, this little plot of ours is very English. We are only bringing our young people together, with a little gentle encouragement to fall in love. My mother has said nothing to Arthur, beyond the barest hint, and as to Miss Porphyria——"

"Heaven forbid! Poppy must know nothing. The faintest suspicion will ruin all."

"I understand. Well, Arthur will have his chance, a very fine chance. And I think—I hope——"

"Anyhow, he must admire Poppy," said Miss Latimer in a low voice.

"He cannot fail to do that," said Otto.

In his own mind, at the same time, he was not at all sure that his brother would be attracted by this stately young heiress. Too absolutely different, he thought. It was not impossible, however, that Porphyria might condescend from her heights to a handsome, amiable young man, if he played his cards well; and this his elder brother was quite determined that he should do.

It seemed to him that Miss Latimer measured her niece extremely well. Arthur, with an easy temper and no disagreeable vices, was just the sort of man to be Squire of Bryans, even if he did, as he probably would, give way to his wife in everything. And if the two did not fall madly in love with each other—somehow he could not fancy that they would—that seemed to Otto no reason why such an excellent match should not come off all the same. He had himself lost his heart to a clever, penniless girl; had married for love and never regretted it. It was a perfect marriage and a real friendship. Alice satisfied his whole nature; even that calculating part of him, which would not of itself have consented to marry her,

rejoiced in being conquered. No surprise at his own unworldliness ever troubled Otto's mind, though he was a man who liked money and knew how to spend it, and who knew very well that life would have been made much easier by a different sort of marriage. He was totally convinced that Alice was the only woman in the world he could have married, and as she and money were not to be had together, money had to go to the wall.

But Arthur's affairs could not at all be arranged in that summary fashion. A man with wits, like Otto, might please himself; but Arthur must marry a rich wife or not marry at all. He had been crammed and pushed into the army somehow, though he was neither clever nor industrious; but that seemed a failure. He did not really care for his profession. India did not suit him; he had come home ill, and was now approaching the end of a long sick leave. If only this benevolent scheme of Miss Latimer's should come to anything, it might be the saving of Arthur. The more the plan was considered the better it seemed. No obstacle must be allowed to rise on Arthur's side. Otto Nugent could be thoroughly hard and worldly for his brother in these matters, whatever he might have been for himself.

At present, having a low opinion of women—except Alice—and not possessing even Miss Latimer's rather tremulous faith in her niece, it struck Otto strongly that the heiress and the painter had been left to themselves quite long enough. His position was a little difficult, for he had no right to interfere, and this he saw clearly enough. But he did not quite like the recollection of that painter's eyes when he came up with Poppy from the garden in the moonlight. It was a recollection that worried him, especially after the clear explanation he had had with Miss Latimer. He thought she was foolish and neglected her charge. He got up, strolled up and down aimlessly once or twice, stifled a yawn, stared at his own shadow on the wall.

"You are tired, Otto. Don't let me keep you here," said Miss Latimer. "I'll wait for Poppy; she is sure to come back soon."

Otto looked at his watch.

"Ten o'clock," he said. "A little late for her, isn't it? I suppose they—they haven't gone down to the lake, after all. Is that possible, do you think?"

"Gone out in a boat, do you mean?"

"Well, is that possible?"

"Do you really think so?"

"Indeed I don't know."

"But I do," said Miss Latimer, and though she laughed she was angry with him.

Her love for Poppy was touched in a sensitive place. She thought, "What a prig he is!" and hoped that Arthur would never be like him. For Miss Fanny Latimer, though she had lived much among inferior natures, had the germs of those beautiful qualities that flowered in Poppy.

"Go in, Otto," she said, with a playful wave of her hand. "You are asleep already; you don't know one person from another. Do you want more explanations? Well—I needn't say it—but if Poppy had decided to go out on the lake, she would have come back to tell me so."

Otto Nugent, as he stood looking at her, put up his hand to hide a smile. He was not asleep at all, and saw that the little lady was angry.

"Silly old woman!" he thought. "Blind and sentimental. Of course, whatever the girl chooses to do is right in her eyes. She spoils her down to the ground. She would have no business to cry out if all this moonlight rubbish were to end in an elopement with the painter."

With these thoughts came a strong and disinterested desire to kick that painter out of Herzheim. This would be an effectual way of playing Arthur's game for him, except that it might prejudice Poppy in a wrong direction.

"In the name of goodness, why don't they come—why don't they arrive?" Otto almost muttered, thinking of his family. "With these useless delays and the utter foolishness of these two women, everything will go wrong."

Miss Latimer saw and heard nothing of these impatiences. To her defence of Poppy he answered with perfect meekness:

"Forgive me. I didn't mean anything, really, except selfishness. You forget how little I have seen of her yet. And of course I don't imagine that she enjoys talking to that fellow. It is entirely kindness on her part, I quite see; but he ought not to take advantage of her kindness. Are you too tired to walk down the orchard a little way? We might meet them."

If Geoffrey had admired and worshipped

his questioner less, the examination he went through that evening would have puzzled him a good deal more. He had to describe his whole art life; how, and where, and how long he had studied, the methods of his masters, his own ideas, and wishes, and aims. Poppy had read a good deal of art criticism, and had picked up certain terms, as people do, without knowing anything of art. She frankly confessed that she knew nothing, but she was anxious, it seemed, to discover all that her friend knew. She listened to him with interest, and was evidently comparing all that he said with things prearranged in her own mind. In truth, there seemed reason to be pleased and satisfied with all he told her. His notions sounded so good that she almost began to feel more hopeful for him.

Only—here was the difficulty and the puzzle—why was there such a distance between his talk and his work? Why, with all this knowledge about atmosphere, about local colour and "good stuff," and the rest of the technical jargon, had he produced those hard, glaring, laboured drawings, those metallic mountains wrapped in clouds of cotton-wool, those trees like heavy, confused blotches in a landscape that might have been painted on china? His way of seeing things, of course. Every artist must have his own way, Poppy reminded herself. Ten people may look at a sunset, and each see it differently. But with the remembrance of those Swiss sketches before her eyes, the sad conviction came back and weighed upon her in spite of argument:

"He is not an artist; he never will be an artist. It is not my ignorance; it is truth. It is his own way of seeing, of course; but not a real painter's way. He will never get on, never; but who can tell him so? Certainly not a person who knows nothing. And yet what a waste of a man's life! How useful he might be in some other profession, so clever and good as he is, poor fellow! As it is, he will have nothing but disappointment; and he will always go on believing in himself, and blame other people for what is himself. He won't even believe experience. What can be sadder than such a life, spent in trying to do what he can't, what he never can do! Are there many such lives, I wonder?"

Poppy's eyes and mouth grew so sad as she listened to Geoffrey, and thought her own thoughts about it all, that presently,

by slow degrees, the dreamy joy with which he watched her and answered her, talking his best, changed into a kind of uneasiness, a faint, puzzled anxiety. Even the touch of her questions, as soft as that of her fingers, began to hurt a little in time, and yet Poppy had never forgotten for a moment that she might be playing on a very sensitive instrument.

At last he said to her—he was sitting on the bench near her now:

"When you were looking at the mountains from my window, do you remember what you said?"

As he spoke, he leaned a little back into his own corner; his face flushed, and his heart was beating violently. It must not be possible for her to see the one or hear the other.

"No; what did I say?" said Poppy, in her sweet, grave voice.

"I thought you were perfectly right, and it was just like you to say it. You said: 'Somehow I find more poetry in things when I don't know too much about them.'"

"Yes," she said, not understanding him. "I think I do."

"But that is rather bad for me to remember," he said, very low, "when you have been making me tell you my history in this minute way."

Poppy smiled, and coloured a little too.

"When you examine a thing," Geoffrey went on, "it does not mean that it interests you. Rather the contrary."

"No," she said, a little eagerly. "You don't understand me. I was talking about poetry—fancy, imagination, something that can never be quite real. Mountains are that to me—like pictures in the clouds or in the fire. Real life, human life, is quite a different thing. One cannot know too much about that, I think—about people's thoughts and work. There is nothing so interesting." She laughed out as she went on. "You cannot have thought that it was a want of interest in you that made me ask all those impertinent questions."

"Only a want of poetical interest," said Geoffrey.

"Well, you are alive, you are real; you are not far off, like the mountains."

"No; I am an easy study, with no mysterious distances. Nothing to be imagined about me," he said; and though he was almost laughing too, there was such an oddly sad ring in the voice

which talked this nonsense that Poppy felt that she had somehow, with all her good intentions, done something wrong.

Her pity for him was real and deep; but at that moment, plainly, there was nothing to be done but to finish the talk as kindly as possible.

"You must be a subject of imagination to your own people, if you never go home," she said. "Why don't you go to Sutton Bryans this autumn, and paint some beech-woods?"

He had no time to answer, and they both rose to their feet. Two shadows, Miss Latimer and Mr. Otto Nugent, were moving towards them down the broad, white path.

FROM SUNSET TILL DAWN.

THE solitude of a great city from about the second hour after midnight till the grey dawn comes again, making the mysterious shadows less dark, and bringing back the first throbbings of renewed life, inspires one with a feeling of strange awe. Well did Wordsworth realise this when he stood on Westminster Bridge in the calm dawn of that September day in 1803:

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will;
Dear God! the very houses are asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Against this solitude, that which reigns amidst the lonely hills is as nothing. The one inspires the feeling of lonely isolation in the midst of those slumbering, unheeding millions, whilst the other bestows the companionship of Nature in a thousand varied forms. Nowhere within the scope of our poetic literature has this dominating spirit of Nature been better described than in Wordsworth's lines:

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thoughts supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

There are many who imagine that, after nightfall, Nature loses all personality and life; that night is but another name for the cold gloom of temporary effacement; and that the earth, after sunset, is like some vast theatre of which the footlights have all been extinguished, the curtain has fallen on the final act of the play, and the players have all gone wearily home to

forgetfulness and repose. As a matter of fact, it is not so. All Nature does not go to sleep when the curtain of night is drawn across the heavens, nor are the doors of her treasure-chambers closed against the reverent foot or inquiring eye. During all the night Nature has a subtle life and a mysterious music of her own. Every sound is accentuated, or underscored, as it were—the drone of the dragon-fly, the hum of the belated bee, the blithe chirrup of the grasshopper, and the twitter of the birds in bush and tree. We seem to be nearer the supernatural, too, both in feeling and interpretation.

A nocturnal ramble by meadow, river, and hill, is not a common incident in human experience, but it has in it elements which are at once romantic and picturesque, nor is it without its reward. The matter-of-fact world may smile, and tell us that night is a strange season in which to go abroad over hill and dale in search of knowledge and pleasure. We accept its opinion with good-natured equanimity, and pursue our way all the same, on the principle that we know well what we are about.

How still lies the sleeping village! The merry chimes of the blacksmith's anvil are hushed, and his forge fire restfully slumbers till a new day; the old mill-wheel, coated with green, velvety ooze, stands silent in the deep night. Yonder, in the east, is the moon, about twenty degrees above the horizon. At present it is only a wan half disc; but it will become luminous as it ascends. Here are the grand, picturesque ruins of Calder Towers, fit spot whence to start on our nocturnal ramble. Listen to the "tu-whoo" of the grey owl in some recess of that old ivy-wreathed tower. Hark! there is the call again—a strangely mingled cry, assuredly belonging to the night; flute-like, too, and not altogether weird. It has always seemed to us to be wronging Nature, and to be a libel on the bird himself, to insist that the owl's vocation on this planet of ours is to pose as an anchorite, or a bird of evil omen and dolorous tidings. It is true that both he and the raven have a somewhat shady reputation in this respect, but they can take consoling comfort in the fact that they are not the only individuals so treated by a world that has maligned its greatest benefactors and best friends, from Socrates downwards. It is unfair to him that the charge of bringing calamity to mortals should be laid at his door. He has nothing to do

with the control of Fate. Fate herself is often faithless, and has many an idle jest. He is a mighty hunter, if you will, and has a strange, eerie cry, but his voice is his own, and, in all likelihood, to the ear of his lady-love is sweeter than the nightingale's song—it certainly has not interfered with his wooing. And, if he should hunt by night, it is a household necessity, and he has the consoling thought that he is not interfering with his feathered neighbours who forage by day. He has, moreover, one supreme virtue—all his cares and interests are centred in his spouse and the little ones—and this is more than can be said of many a featherless biped.

Now we are deep in the meadow that leads to the river-side. There is no silence nor rest in these waters day or night. The moon is still ascending the sky, but, being on the wane, its light is wan and cold. The river shimmers, however, in its pale beams, and we can trace, in far-off silvery patches, the windings of the waters by the tall seggans and overhanging alders that fringe the banks. But hark! there is a dull splash—a night moth has been sucked into the jaws of some wary trout. Yonder is a heron, too, standing among the bents which bend in the night breeze. He may have been for hours on that lonely vigil, watching for his prey; but, save for the wind ruffling his feathers at intervals, he is silent and motionless as if carved in stone.

Right over our heads, and swift as an arrow, passes the humming snipe, whilst, circling around us, with querulous, plaintive cry, hovers the anxious and affrighted lapwing, seeking by every artifice in her power to allure us from her young brood. How lightly do the creatures of the fields and woods sleep! The faintest footstep brings the drowsy, responsive twitter or call from fir-wood, beech grove, or river-bank. There is no bird, however, more easily awoken than the lapwing, and we have often found our footsteps disturb her a long way off. When suddenly aroused she flies with quick, jerky flight around the intruder, at the same time uttering cries of plaintive appeal. Little wonder, therefore, that the poacher looks upon the bird with extreme disfavour, as the game-keeper has learned to associate his cry with the movements of that nefarious trespasser.

Hark! a little sedge-warbler has burst into song over yonder, on the opposite

bank of the stream—a song sweet and clear as the notes of a Calabrian flute. The bird is to a certainty deep in the heart of the bushes, surrounded by an impervious screen of boughs, as he is wondrously shy, and can seldom be seen unless from a distance and with the aid of a strong glass. He is yonder, however, jubilant as the midnight reveller in his rollicking, headless song. Often on a midsummer night—when the great belt of grey light never left the horizon all the night through, but crept from the west along the northern horizon till it merged in the eastern dawn—have we heard him, in true ventriloquial fashion, mimic the various harmonies of the noonday grove. He is really the British mocking-bird, facile princeps; even the wood-thrush, with all his versatility, cannot approach him.

We have yet a long stretch to overtake by hillside, river-bank, and dark fir-wood, solemn and undefined in the distance, and ere we return to the village the dawn will be upon us. Listen to that sharp, flute-like, plaintive cry overhead. It is the call of the curlew, who is hurrying off to his feeding-ground by marshy meadow or mountain tarn. Nor is he the only bird on the wing just now—that strange-looking speck, like a fleck of whiteness, is the grey owl flitting around us silent as the creature of a dream. Most birds signal their course either with whirl or flap of wing, but no sound accompanies the owl's phantom flight.

Yonder, at last, is the faintest indication of the dawn in the form of a cold, grey streak in the east. Slowly it advances, and we see that the first stage of the struggle for the mastery between darkness and light has been entered upon. The sky above, however, is yet dark and star-gemmed. The half-moon is slowly sailing up, and the Pleiades are shining overhead in their throbbing pulsations of life and light, whilst Orion is setting behind the western hills which are dimly looming yonder out of the solemn darkness. In the utter stillness which lies around in bank, and field, and tree, we feel the mystic influence of

This holy time, quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration.

Yonder, too, the morning star, large and lustrous, hangs above the old church tower like a lamp of heaven hung o'er a holy shrine. Higher still the light spreads up from the distant east, changing from its primal grey colour to a dark blue, with

here and there filmy flecks of a dusky yellow.

Now comes the ruddy glow deep down amidst the flecks of cloud that lie along the rim of the eastern horizon. These flecks are motionless as anchored ships. Ruddier they become, and seem to throb or pulsate, as if by some unseen influence they were newly gifted with a life of transcendent glory. Gradually the setting of ethereal blue, in which they are so beautifully placed, becomes light green in tint, and the cloudy bars assume the colour of glowing amber.

But as this goes on the earth is awaking. With the first streak of dawn there comes over the land a strange, cold sough, ruffling the surface of the still pools and passing with a "sis—sh" amongst the beeches and firs. It is the signal that Nature is astir again, and has drawn her first fresh breath ere entering on another dial's round of the circling sun. Fresh and glad some comes that breeze as blithely it blows

Reveillée to the breaking morn.

Have you ever observed closely the gradual awaking of animal life at the first indications of dawn? From the time when spring is advanced, and all the summer through, first of all comes the faint twitter of the swallows, informing us that they have got their eyes opened, and are pluming their feathers and taking a breath of fresh air, ere contemplating their foraging expeditions for themselves and their young brood. Half an hour later the first chirruping of the thrush is heard from the bushes at the corner of the meadow; while, just as the sun is throwing up his shafts into the heart of the clouds that skirt the horizon, and before his burnished disc comes in sight, the lark soars to his exultant notes, higher and higher, shaking down in one unceasing stream his melodious strains upon the awakened earth.

The sky in the east, yonder, has now a deep blue colour, and forms a fine contrast to the green hills in the comparative foreground. A cool breeze comes up now from the south, bringing with it white clouds sailing at an immense height, with openings compassed by low-lying banks of slumbering vapour. These, if you closely watch them, you will find to slowly dissolve: fragments break away from them just as the edges of Polar glaciers slip into the sea from the ice-cliff; only, the magician's hand

that sunders the fleecy rims from the snow-white body of the cloud is alike silent and unseen. Watch the mystery of the tiny sundered patch. Onward it drifts from the solid white mass, like a strayed lamb from the flock. Still on it goes, exhaling itself in the infinite, every moment getting thinner and more translucent, its margin stretching out into an uneven fringe, until it fades away in the finest silken threads, and is lost in the illimitable blue. Whilst this transformation is going on in the boundless arena above, what a mysterious and fascinating charm there is in all these changes! The delicate hues, the contrast of the fleecy white with the deepest blue, the ever-changing forms, the light shining through the gauzy texture, and their gentle, dreamy motion, lend these clouds an exquisite beauty and grace which from the memory can never fade away. There is in them, both in form and motion, the most exquisite poetry. We never see them in their calm, stately drifting through the blue sky, without thinking of the charming and peaceful lines of Shelley:

Underneath the young grey dawn,
A multitude of dense, white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick folds along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.

But the blue smoke is curling from the cottage roofs in the village down yonder, and we must take our way homewards. As we descend to the village we have the consciousness that we have been abroad to some purpose. And no one can blame us if, in some calm retrospect of this walk, in after days, there should come upon our lips the lines:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!

THE COCO DE MER.

THERE should be great rejoicing among the vegetable world at Kew; especially should the Palm House be agitated by a joyous crepitation, for a prince royal of all the palms—it may be a princess, but as there is no Salic law in the case that does not signify—has been brought into the world under the skilful management of the staff of the Royal Gardens. The young "Coco de Mer" has not yet taken its place among the tall palms of the great house. Its royal nursery is at present in the warm and congenial atmosphere of the house which contains the tank of the Victoria Regia. There, just above the level of the

water, is perched the big flower-pot that contains the vigorously shooting young plant; and on the top of what seems to be a drain-pipe set on end reposes, in close proximity, the mother nut—a double nut of great size—which still continues in a certain measure to nourish her young offspring.

The plant is said to be the first that has ever been raised in Europe, and the mode of its germination is so peculiar and interesting as to attract a good deal of attention from even casual and unscientific visitors. Frequenters of the Gardens pay regular visits to enquire after the health and progress of the little stranger; and the holiday-makers gather round it and peruse the card which contains a short account of its lineage and antecedents.

A certain flavour of mystery and romance attaches to this singular palm, of which the nut was known and treasured long before the tree itself that bore it had been identified. For the latter is found only on two small islands in the Indian Ocean belonging to the Seychelles group, which, although known to navigators from the date of Vasco di Gama's discovery of a route to India by way of the Cape, were left to themselves till 1743, when the French Governor of the Mauritius annexed them to his sovereign's dominions.

French botanists and explorers were not long in identifying the tree which produced the wonderful nuts, and hastened to impart their knowledge to the scientific world, in this heedless way missing a fine opportunity of clearing something like a fortune in the nut trade, for, up to the time of this discovery, the double nut was highly prized, and as much as four hundred pounds had been given for a single specimen. But it can be imagined what a "bear market" there was in double cocos when it was whispered abroad that this precious nut was "as plenty as blackberries" in two islands in the Indian seas.

Before that discovery the only specimens known of the double nut had been floated up by the sea on the coasts of the Indies or by the islands adjacent, thousands of miles distant from its place of origin. When picked up on the seashore—not a common object by any means, but a treasure of the greatest rarity—it did not necessarily bring good fortune to its finder. On the Maldivé Islands it was death to possess it, as when found it should be taken at once to the King. It was the inside of the nut that His Majesty princi-

pally valued, for it was believed to be an unfailing antidote against all poisons. The shells the King would bestow on his favourites. They take a fine polish, especially when hardened and condensed by a voyage on their own account across the Indian Ocean; and thus, beautifully carved and embossed, they make handsome drinking-cups, with enough of their original virtue about them to give warning of any peculiarly poisonous brew that may be poured into them.

The Indians also attached great medicinal value to the coco de mer, which seems originally to have received its name from the Portuguese, as the first to open trade and form settlements on the coast of India. A Dutch naturalist speaks of the nut as "a wonderful miracle of nature, the most rare of marine productions, a fruit growing itself in the sea whose tree has hitherto been concealed from the eye of man."

But, according to the Malays, the tree had actually been seen: a great palm, growing upwards from the bed of the sea, and visible at a great depth through the translucent waves; but when any one attempted to reach the tree by diving, it vanished away and was no more seen. Another account has it that those who dived for it were no more seen, for, according to the negro magicians, who professed to know something of the secret of its origin, this wonderful tree, in its submarine branches, harboured an enormous griffin, which nightly came to shore and, seizing elephants and tigers, carried them off to its nest and devoured them, and not satisfied with such common fare, lay in wait for ships, which the huge beast would drag towards it with its long arms and then devour the luckless mariners at its leisure.

With such pleasant traditions attached to it, and encompassed by such a delightful mystery, it seems almost a pity that the light of common day should have been let in upon the matter by the discovery of the nut as a mere terrestrial product. Yet many curious speculations are excited by the existence of such a specialised variety of the palm upon two solitary islands only, thousands of miles away from any great mass of land. If the product itself is neither so rich and rare as it was once supposed to be, yet the wonder is all the greater as to how it got there, perched, that is, upon a rocky summit surrounded by the lone ocean. The islands on which grows the coco de mer, the scientific

name of which is *Lodoicea Sychellarum*—in the days of ignorance it was called *Cocos Maldivica*, from the specimens of its fruit being found chiefly on the Maldives—are not coralline islands, like so many in the Indian and Pacific seas, but veritable granitic peaks, the last remains, perhaps, of some submerged continent on which have taken refuge a few select remnants of the fauna and flora of a more primitive world.

In political geography, the Seychelles are grouped with the Mauritius, and consequently, when the British acquired the latter, the Seychelles came within the bargain conferred by the Treaty of Vienna, and with them we acquired the practical monopoly of the coco de mer. An English observer soon after the cession of the islands, writes with enthusiasm of the sight of these palms "growing in thousands, old and young," the middle-aged flourishing, the old decaying, and the young growing up to replace them, just like some human family, and he adds: "It is difficult not to look upon them as animated objects."

The same feeling arises when regarding the specimen at Kew Gardens. There seems an almost animal vitality about the plant, and the mode in which it is connected with the parent nut, and absorbs nutriment therefrom, bears a strong analogy to arrangements in animal life. A striking distinction between the sexes tends to aid the illusion, if illusion it be. The male tree is tall and stately, rising often to a height of a hundred feet, and producing huge spathes which contain the fertilising element. The female is generally twenty or thirty feet less in height, but with a more spreading plumage of fronds, and will produce, in suitable conditions, perhaps a hundred nuts in a year; and she comes to bear fruit in her ninth year, and often earlier, and the days of her years range closely with the scriptural span allotted to mankind.

Yet the value of the coco de mer to the dwellers in its native isles is not so much for the double nut, which, whatever its medicinal value, is not good eating, nor is the oil extracted from it equal to that of the ordinary cocoa-nut. But the grand leafage of the palm forms the ridging of the native huts—a hundred leaves will make a whole house, and a single leaf makes a hen-coop, as may be seen in the drawings of the late Miss Marianne North at her gallery in the Gardens. The down

of the young foliage forms good stuffing for pillows, mattresses, etc., and the leaf-ribs are made into baskets and brooms—to such humble uses has the royal family of palms descended in its latter days.

As to whether our English specimen will turn out a boy or a girl, it is as yet too early to speak with certainty. And the prospects of rearing the interesting visitor are not to be spoken of with confidence. But there is no harm in wishing that our coco de mer may grow to a hundred feet high, and live for a hundred years.

SOME DUKES OF YORK.

THE revival of a title which for the past five centuries and longer has been heard of more or less in the stirring epochs of English history, is an event which raises a certain interest in other Dukes of York, most of whom are lineally connected with the Prince who is the latest representative of the famous house of York. On the whole the title is one that has rung pleasantly in the ears of the Englishmen of succeeding generations. Its holders have generally been popular favourites, and distinguished by courage and courtesy; and while they have had their fair share of vicissitudes and misfortunes, nothing that is ill-omened or unlucky can be held to attach itself to the White Rose of York.

For the first Duke of York we need go no further back than the reign of Edward the Third. There were no English Dukes, indeed, before that reign. The title was one that seemed to belong to the Holy Roman Empire, and it was as vicar of the Empire that Edward probably felt himself empowered to create dukedoms for his numerous progeny of sons. The fifth of these was Edmund of Langley, created Duke of York, who lived to see his nephew Richard deposed, and who is chiefly noteworthy to us as calling so persistently for his boots in Shakespeare's chronicle play of "King Richard the Second." That he can't get his boots owing to his wife's machinations saves the life of his son Edward, who is thus enabled to gain the start in a race for Windsor, and to reach the presence of the new King and obtain his pardon before his father arrives to denounce him as a conspirator.

When good old York shuffles off this mortal coil, and has no more need for his boots, his son Edward steps into them,

and becoming Duke of York, serves the House of Lancaster faithfully; and having no progeny that one hears of, is not an object of much suspicion to his sovereign, and dies in his service, leading the vanguard of the little English army at Agincourt. But it is otherwise with his brother Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who marries Ann Mortimer, the heiress of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of King Edward the Third, and thus unites two potent lines of succession. Thus when Henry the Fifth was about to depart for the French wars, he thought it best to make all safe at home by beheading my lord of Cambridge, who left a son, Richard, however, not yet old enough to be beheaded. And when Richard came to a beheadable age, luckily for him a child King was upon the throne. Then we have the episode, as Shakespeare and the chroniclers give it, of the quarrel between Richard and Somerset in the Temple Gardens, and of the challenge of the former to those who favoured his cause:

From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.

Then as a result of the quarrel between Gloucester and the Cardinal, Beaufort, and their temporary reconciliation, Holinshed tells us how "the King for joy caused a solemn feast to be made on Whitsunday: on which daie he created Richard Plantagenet sonne and heire to the earl of Cambridge (whom his father at Southampton had put to death as before ye have heard) duke of York not forseeing that this preferment should be his destruction." Yet, as the King was only seven years old at the time, he is hardly to be blamed for his want of forethought and penetration.

The new Duke of York was a brave and stirring Prince, and finding the crown almost derelict, he went for it with great skill and determination, backed by the general good wishes of the nation. That he was eventually defeated at Wakefield by Queen Margaret, and speedily executed—

Off with his head, and set it on York gates;
So York may overlook the town of York.

was an unfortunate accident due to Richard's reckless courage; but his son Edward, who may be reckoned as the fourth Duke of York, one of the best captains of the age, soon redressed the balance, and avenged his father's death. About Edward's son, another Richard, Duke of York, there still hangs the romance of a doubtful unknown fate. Whether he and his brother, the

titular Edward the Fifth, were really murdered in the Tower, and, if so, by whose authority, is still, and ever likely to be, a question about which different opinions may be held.

The next Duke of York is unfamiliar as such; we know him better as the burly, butcher-like Prince, the bluff King Harry of the popular legend. But he was created Duke of York in his youth, when his elder brother Arthur was alive. Some time elapsed before another Duke appeared on the scene, and then in 1604-5, in the month of January, cannie King Jamie having recently come to the throne, there is a grand ceremonial at Whitehall, when Charles, Duke of Albany in the peerage of Scotland, a child some four years old, takes the Bath with other young Companions of the Order, and probably holloed lustily during the process, and on the following day was created Duke of York. Noble Earls bore respectively the robes of estate, the golden rod, the cap of state, and it took three of them to bear the little Duke himself, who was a cantankerous child by all accounts, and who, perhaps, was allowed to suck the golden rod to keep him quiet. Happy for him if he had lived and died Duke of York, for Charles would have made an excellent nobleman, and would have been spared the miseries of his unhappy reign.

Of Charles's son, James, we seem to know a good deal more as Duke of York. First we have the little Duke of York a boy prisoner in St. James's Palace, and helped out of the window by Sir John Denham, the poet of "Cooper's Hill," with whom he escapes to France. Less happily in after years, restored to greatness, the same Duke employs himself in carrying off the elderly poet's young and pretty wife, a matter which ended tragically enough for her, as she died soon after, and Denham was suspected of having poisoned her.

When in the company of Samuel Pepys we constantly meet with the Duke of York, for whom, as Lord High Admiral, the worthy Clerk of the Acts has the greatest respect, although he may not rate his administrative talents very highly. Nor can the Duke be reckoned much of a naval commander, for though he was in some big sea fights, he seems to have been fairly anxious to get out of them again. Yet James was respectable enough as Duke of York, and it was only when he came to be King of

England that he made a conspicuous failure in affairs.

With the downfall of the Stuarts there comes a kind of schism in the line of Dukes of York. Actually, for some time there were two: a Stuart Duke of York, Henry Benedict, a Roman Cardinal, and son of him whom our forefathers called the old Pretender; and Edward Augustus, of the house of Guelph, son of Prince Fred, and a younger brother of the good monarch, Farmer George. Of this Duke of York not much is known. We may catch a glimpse of him at Clieveden, cramming Greek with some worthy D.D., and for encouragement taken over to see the Eton boys, also cramming Greek, but with faculties sharpened by the knowledge of the birch-rod suspended over them, as it were, by a single hair. Later on we may find our Royal Duke making the grand tour, and received with due distinction at the little Courts and big ones by the Royalties, the Grand Dukes and small Princes who swarmed in that pre-revolutionary age; and he is described by a courtly chronicler of that tour as "an amiable Prince, the just object of the general adoration" of the British people. But the Duke died in the prime of life, and for a time the Cardinal at Rome had the monopoly of the title. But he does not seem to have been a bigoted Jacobite, this one, and there were exchanges of civilities between the Cardinal and the Guelphs, and at last it is said that the former, having suffered losses, accepted a pension at the hands of George the Third.

There is a weak kind of analogy between the position of the first creator of Dukes and of George the Third, inasmuch as both of them had large families to provide with appanages and titles. A portrait by West is still in existence of good Queen Charlotte, George's amiable consort, a picture once on show in the state apartments of Windsor Castle, "the background embellished," says a contemporary description, "with a distant view of Windsor Castle, and fourteen of the Royal offspring represented as playing on the lawn." And even with that there was one left out, probably the Prince of Wales, the future George the Fourth, whose dignity might have been hurt by such a representation. But there is no need to ransack Royal lumber-rooms to find a portrait of Frederick, Duke of York, the last holder of the title before the present creation. His florid, open countenance is to be met with in numerous prints and innumerable

caricatures of the period. And is not his effigy to be found standing on the top of his own column, looking down on his favourite parade-ground in St. James's Park?

A more fitting memorial of one who was not undeservedly popular as "the soldier's friend" is the Duke of York's School in Chelsea, founded for the education of children whose fathers had been in the ranks. According to Greville, too, the Duke of York was the founder of the Covent Garden Theatrical Fund, for the Duke was a good friend to the profession, and might be styled the actor's friend as well as the soldier's; and, indeed, circus-riders and artists of all kinds could reckon upon the Duke's good wishes, and when there was a double claim, as in Philip Astley's case, of old trooper and present performer, why, Frederick of York might be counted upon as a sure and liberal patron.

Yet the Duke did not escape calumny. There was that unlucky affair in which Mrs. Mary Ann Clarke was concerned. Mrs. Clarke, it was well known, made rain and fine weather at the War Office as well as in the Duke's susceptible bosom, and she carried on no doubt a profitable traffic in commissions and appointments. But such things were in the manners of the day, and it was only that the Duke did not grudge his friends their little pickings, for he was above touching such base money himself.

The Duke had all the intrepidity of his family, and although as a commander his lot was generally to retreat, it was not for want of personal courage. And his duel with Colonel Lennox will be remembered, when he waived all the privileges of his Royal blood and met the Colonel on the "field of honour." The quarrel, after all, was no great matter. It was said that the Duke, at a masked ball, had been addressed by two masks in most insulting language, and that he challenged one as Colonel Lennox, and bade him, if he dare, remove his mask—which the other would not do. But Lennox denied the imputation, although the Duke, who was his commanding officer, evidently did not believe him. And later on, the Duke asserted publicly that Lennox had been addressed at D'Aubigny's club in language to which no gentleman would have submitted. Hearing this, Colonel Lennox on parade went up to the Duke at the head of his regiment, the Coldstreams, and demanded an explana-

tion. The Colonel was put under arrest; but it was intimated to him by the Duke that out of uniform "he, the Duke, wore a blue coat and was easily to be found." The two met on Wimbledon Common, at twelve paces, and it was arranged that they should fire together. At the signal, Colonel Lennox fired, and the ball grazed His Royal Highness's curl—that Brunswick toupet that was "de rigueur" long ago—but the Duke himself did not, and would not, fire. Nor would he make any acknowledgement that Lennox had acted in an honourable manner. No; he had come there to be shot at, and the other man might blaze away as long as he pleased, but that could not alter his opinion. And so the matter ended, for it was evidently impossible for Lennox to go on making a target of a Royal Prince.

A later picture of the last Duke of York is given us in Greville's diary. The Duchess lives at Oatlands Park, "the worst managed establishment in England," and the Duke, his official business over, comes down in honest bourgeois fashion from Saturday to Monday. Dinner lasts from eight to eleven, enlivened with a good deal of loose talk, which both Duke and Duchess delight to hear, though not to share in. As soon as dinner is over whist begins, and lasts as long as any one will play, the Duke being equally amused whether the play be high or low, although he prefers "fives" and "ponies." But the Duchess does not care to lose her money, and plays only for half-crown points. With congenial spirits the whist lasts till four or five in the morning, yet the Duke is up betimes. Perhaps he never goes to bed. The Duchess does not, anyhow, but wanders about from room to room, taking a nap on a sofa when she is sleepy, and sallying out at any hour of the day or night surrounded by her troops of dogs. Next to dogs, monkeys and parrots are her chief delight. Mankind she tolerates, especially such as bring her new dogs, or rare monkeys. Yet she is an agreeable hostess, clever and well-informed, as became a Prussian Princess, and has a sovereign contempt for form and ceremony of every kind.

The Duke did not forget that he was a dignitary of the Church—his father had given him the prince bishopric of Osnaburg when he was six months old—and attended church regularly each Sunday morning, returning to a hearty breakfast of cold meats. If he burned the candle at

both ends, he took care to keep up the supply of combustible matter, and so lived on to his sixty-fourth year, tormented a good deal—as were most of the free-livers of the period—by premature infirmities, but dying comfortably enough in his easy-chair in his grey dressing-gown, just as if dropping off to sleep.

If we want another reminder of the last Duke of York, we may find it in Regent Street, within sight of the Duke's column, where stands York House, now full of animation as the Junior Army and Navy Stores. Here, of old times, soldiers would mount guard, and mounted orderlies would gallop up, and crowds of officers would pass in and out. For here is the site of the town house of His Royal Highness of York, Commander-in-Chief of the British army. The Duke had to resign in 1809 on account of the scandal about Mrs. Clarke, but his brother reappointed him soon after with the general approval of those concerned. The slim-looking gentleman with the eagle nose, who calls sometimes, is Arthur, Duke of Wellington. The Duke of York, although he appreciates the services of his great subordinate, has no very cordial liking for him. To his intimates the Duke confides his feeling "that he was sacrificed to that Wellesley. But for the influences exerted for him, he, the Duke of York, would have been selected for the command in the Peninsula, and all the glories of the subsequent campaigns would have been his." That was the poor Duke's grievance to the last. Like the old commodore, he was not allowed to fight any more. Yet he died in harness after all, disdaining to surrender even to the grim commander of all the commanders-in-chief.

MY FRIENDLY JAP.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

My one excuse is my inexperience. I was such a "Grif"; so new to Japan and Japanese ways. I hardly think I was to blame. Of course if I had known—but then, how could I? I had only been in Yokohama a little over a week, and had been so busy settling down that I had seen and learned nothing, literally nothing, of the natives, or of their appearance, or their various works and ways. To me they appeared all alike. I suppose that to a shepherd, worthy of the name, each member of his flock eventually individualises itself from the rest; but that presupposes a

certain lapse of time, and the possession of what is called a "seeing eye," together with intimate contact and association. Whereas, as I have said, I had only just arrived, and they all looked so tremendously alike—nay, with their peculiar notions as to dress, there were no distinctions of sex, at all events that he who ran might read; and this, in the little I had had to do with them, led to some rather droll mistakes. Perhaps I lacked the discriminating eye referred to; possibly also that accounted for my so seldom recollecting faces—certainly mine was no royal memory in that respect, and I found them very droll—and here I mean the natives, as well as the mistakes. But then they, the natives, were invariably cheerful, attentive, and good-tempered, so that when one of them singled me out for particular—

But that was how it all began.

No sooner had I settled down in the place than I found that living in hotels would never do. It was far too noisy, and neither comfortable nor cheap. There were plenty of reasons in short why I should arrange to board with a private family, always supposing that I could find one willing to take me in—as to which the more cynical among my friends intimated I should find no difficulty whatsoever.

"Look here, Jepherson," one of the more candid ones said, "don't you be an ass! You know pretty well the best and the worst of this place by now, and, if you will take my advice—which I don't suppose you will, by the way—" And here Jernyngham, who was my senior by some five or six years, smiled after a superior and especially aggravating fashion quite his own, which smile said plainer than words, "You youngsters are such fools!" while aloud he went on, "You will just stay where you are. Why, if you take it on the ground of cookery alone, you will have to 'sup full of horrors,' to say nothing of—"

And here followed a whole catalogue of ills I knew not of, which, in the speaker's estimation, far outweighed those from which I sought to fly, together with any possible benefit that I was insane enough to expect might accrue.

Needless, perhaps, to say I was firm—as obstinate as the animal I had been so considerably warned not to become. Else had my story remained untold; and to support me in my resolve I had endless reasons, all of which I proceeded to ad-

vance. I was only out for twelve months. I wanted to see the native life and learn the native "lingo."

But I will pass over the initial difficulties of my plan until the time when I found myself fairly located in the house of a certain—well, he might almost have been styled "Hokee Pokee," so far as my ability to give any adequate idea of his real style and title goes. To simplify matters, therefore, I called him "The Mikado," an appellative that for a time, I have reason to believe, rather frightened and shocked him by its daring irreverence; but Japan being nothing if not revolutionary, nowadays, ended by agreeably titillating that sense of humour, without which no true Jap would be complete. I even learned, after one or two mistakes, to discriminate so far as not to extend the same easily remembered title to his wife, with whom for long my unfortunate tendency led me to confound him; but with the remainder of his numerous family I promptly gave up nomenclature in despair. To me they might all have been twins. Indeed, as I have already stated, the strong family likeness that existed amongst them extended to the whole race as well. There might be differences of degree, but not of kind. Some might be more pleasing as to their expression, or it might be that they were the same individuals in a more amiable mood—I could not tell. How was I to know when all had the same tight, monochromatic skins, the same small, obliquely planted eyes, and the same undeveloped and indefinite features? Not unpleasing in effect—if only from the constant smile, which again by its universality and inveteracy served but to add the final impediment to those I already experienced in the way of identification. It was the "Comedy of Errors" over again, only multiplied a thousand-fold. And the result would have been sufficiently bewildering had I allowed myself weakly to be bewildered, which I did not. I adopted the only course compatible with continued sanity, and either took for granted that each successive visitor to my room—for privacy, as we English call it, does not exist in Japan—was in true Darby and Joan fashion "always the same," or "yet another of 'em," according as to whether they happened to bring with them whatever it was I had asked for or not. Nor did I force this to its logical conclusion by foolishly trying to determine whether the pleasing uncertainty

that so frequently followed on the delivery of my orders, or requests, was due to my having addressed them to the wrong person, or to my own ignorance of Japanese, or the still greater want of knowledge of English shown by my would-be entertainers, of whom some may have known it rather worse than the others, I allow; but to have placed them in the precise order of their demerits would have puzzled Max Müller himself, or the entire body of Civil Service Examiners. That way madness most surely must have lain, while to attack their own language was, for me, quite enough—indeed, I fancy there was some to spare.

However, I was easily satisfied, and in answer to the prevailing characteristic, I cultivated a stereotyped and fairly expansive smile, which served to establish and preserve amicable relations where mere words failed. This, and an inveterate equanimity under no matter what of disappointment or surprise, carried me through fairly well until the time when the first rawness of my "Griffin" days wore off, and I began imperfectly to know my way about.

Of course, Jernyngham waxed derisive and facetious at my expense. Wanted to know how many of my brother puppies I had cannibalistically swallowed; and enlarged knowingly on the mystic horrors of the various appetising soups that so regularly graced my table. But what of that? I could afford to disregard his sneers, and rise superior to his vulgar chaff, could safely set it down to the envy which really was its cause. For that I was exceptionally comfortable, and far more at home, at about half the cost, than whilst at the hotel with him, was quite early placed beyond a doubt.

To this end the attentions of one in particular of my entertainers conducted in no small degree. A bright and merry little mortal, who, whenever I was in the house, was never far away, contriving always to be at hand in a morning to wish me "Saionará," or good-bye; or lying in wait in the evening for my return, to greet me with a pleasant word or smile, the latter, at all events, certain of being properly acknowledged, because correctly understood. Untiringly solicitous for my comfort—innumerable the surreptitious bowls of "saki," or more open, because less intoxicating, tea, that were unostentatiously brought and left by my side. So gently, too, was the spiriting done as

never to disturb. If I were busy writing, the supposed necessary was laid down softly and without a word; and retiring noiselessly to a corner, there, on the thick rice-straw mattress which overlaid the floor, the watchful bearer would sit and smoke, and smile, and smile again, and smile.

Is it any wonder, then, that a strong feeling of good fellowship should have sprung up between us? The interest shown in me was so patiently unobtrusive, and yet so persistent and undisguised, that gradually there was established an almost electric chain of sympathy between us, whereby I grew to derive the same pleasure from the smiling presence of "Fido," as I began to call my friend, that I might have done from that of a favourite and well-trained dog. It was company. I was less lonely; and yet it never in any way interfered with my work. And when, growing weary of my task, I would lay down my pen with a sigh, I had but to turn round to meet that invariable, absorbed, and interested smile, the effect of which was so soothing and so consolatory that often enough I felt inclined to call out, "Poor old fellow! good old Fido!" and, with many a gentle pat, bid him, "There, there, old chap; lie down!"

But work once over for the day, my companion developed qualifications more valuable still.

It appeared that, whichever of the family might be the worst, this was the best English scholar of them all. And really the society was so "mutually improving" as to be surprising. Each was by turns master and pupil, and the exchange was delightfully advantageous and provocative of mirth. It was not unlike a pleasant game at which both sides won. And never, surely, whether as teacher or as taught, was any one ever found more entirely patient, intelligent, enthusiastic, or obliging! And oh! how we did enjoy ourselves and each other's blunders! And, oh, how Fido laughed! With what a spontaneous gaiety and lightness of heart! It was infectious. And how well we grew to understand each other's looks if, as was not infrequent, we halted for a word. Truly my tutor was a jewel, a treasure; and each day that passed gave me cause to congratulate myself on my marvellous good fortune.

Naturally the fellows at the office noticed, linguistically, how I went ahead—as how could they fail? It was marvellous—

miraculous! As Jernyngham said, with his customary sneer:

"Really, Jepherson, we did not know you had it in you!"

And well might he be surprised. I was myself; for, spite of the time Jernyngham had spent over the language, he certainly had it not in him, whereas I soon grew quite an authority on the "beastly patter," which was such "awful rot" that not a fellow there but would have been glad enough to shirk it.

Not only that, when I come to think what life in Yokohama might very well have been without the distraction afforded by my little friend, I can never be sufficiently thankful for having been saved from such unmitigated dullness.

The theatres, although amusing at the first, soon became tiresome and slow; even the juggling and balancing, wonderful though they were, soon palled; while to see men apparently turning themselves inside out, under the thin pretence of performing acrobatic feats, was too painful and disgusting to witness more than once.

But when I came to know more of the language, and could mix with the people without what was passing around appearing so much of a sealed book, then did the life grow interesting indeed.

To see the same old human nature under such different disguise was a perpetual wonder and an ever-recurring joy; for priests, people, warriors, daimios, mikados, up to that crowning absurdity of all, the great Tycoon himself, all were fresh and full of charm. The very greetings in the streets were an endless delight in themselves, with their ceremonious advances and retreats, their frequent genuflexions and rubbings of the knees; they were better than any play; while for the farce there was the native "maasher," who feels himself "quite English, don'cher know," and who would startle even a nation that can proudly point to "Arry," dressed as he is in a "pot" hat and a really striking suit of "dittoes," for which he has abandoned his own dignified and more becoming garb. He looks too mean for anything; evidently feeling that the stately walk that became him so well in his own more "swagger" dress is hardly, perhaps, appropriate to the latest thing in tweeds, and yet, so far, unable to hit on one that fits them any better.

But this, of course, was "advanced" Japan; the more conservative element was profoundly interesting. Art, manners, and

observances, all were full of charm, and assisted as I was in my understanding of them by such a capable exponent as was mine, the time passed quickly and agreeably enough, until the day when my eyes were fully opened.

It is possible that I may have crowed over my fellow-clerks unduly; unconsciously, too, I must have made them feel the burden of my admitted superiority, for Jernyngham grew sore, and, if that were practicable, nastier than ever.

He was always asking after my "Professor," and whether he could not form a class; and, evidently wild at his own short-sighted waste of time, wanted to make up for it out of hand. But I took no notice of his taunts, any more than of his wish to join me at my "crach"; for that would, indeed, have been too much. I might stand him at the office, but not the home as well. He would have introduced the one discord in the perfect harmony, would have upset and spoiled the whole thing.

But with little Bob Englefield it was quite another matter. I did at last ask him to dine. But then Bob was Bob, and Jernyngham's antithesis; a genial, good-hearted, kindly little soul, and him I did not mind. So, as I say, one night I arranged to take him home to dine.

I shall not readily forget that night, the last, as it turned out, of the old easy-going relations. Not that it made any surface difference all at once; but you shall hear.

I am not going to inflict on you all the various details of the dinner, or of how Bob and I put on Japanese dress, and squatted most uncomfortably on the floor in our desire to do it honour, nor recite the countless and seemingly interminable courses, for our host had been lavish in our behalf. Enough that when we went back to my room to enjoy a quiet cigarette Bob enquired reproachfully:

"Well, old chappie, where is this natural and native phenomenon of yours? Why don't you trot him out? And why, may I ask, was he not at dinner? You surely are not going to keep him dark and sell me after all?"

"Not at dinner?" I repeated. "Why, it was he who waited on us by his own particular desire."

And I stared in astonishment at Bob, who, after a slight pause, due evidently to doubt, rolled over on the floor in a perfect paroxysm of emotion—or was it pain?

At first I thought he was ill, and a fear

lest the unaccustomed food might have disagreed with him moved me to ask:

"What is it, old fellow? Indigestion or——"

"Indigestion! G'arn away!" he replied. "Indigestion! You—you artful old fraud. Oh, you sly old——"

But here his loquacity gave way before my very genuine astonishment, and, with his mouth agape, he stared wildly back.

"D'you mean to say you have the nerve to sit there and tell me you—you don't know?" he cried at length.

Then, as I looked a whole catechism of interrogatories, he had another roll, to presently rise again remonstrant.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear! This is a game! It's too funny for anything!"

"So glad you are enjoying it," I rejoined with dignity. "Possibly I should myself," I went on pleasantly, "if I knew where the laugh comes in."

And "Here it is!" shrieked Bob, going off once more; as, to us, entered my little friend, bearing the inevitable tea and saki on a tiny lacquered tray; and hearing the laugh, nothing would serve but the new-comer must join in quite heartily, and without restraint.

This was too much for even my patience, and I suppose I must have looked hurt, for Bob tried to sober himself sufficiently to explain; but no, it was useless; off went the happy and ridiculous pair again, while I was "left lamenting" my ignorance of the joke. But even Bob was tired at last, so wiping his eyes, he asked demurely:

"Had you not better introduce me to your—friend, you—oh! you disreputable old——" But words failed him to characterise my offence, while my indignation mounted higher and higher at each fresh outrage, to say nothing of the mystification.

"Is it necessary, do you think? You appear to get along—to understand each other well enough without." At which severe remark Bob suffered a relapse.

"You don't mean to say you—you persist in your absurd pretence?" cried he next. "You do? Then allow me to introduce you to Miss—Miss—oh! my——" He broke out again, and:

"Yes, yes," smilingly assented my friend. "Miss—Miss—but no, not 'Ohmy!'" Whereupon I stared as the full absurdity of the situation began to dawn upon me.

"Can't you see, you short-sighted old——"

But of course you can; don't tell me! You know well enough that your fidus Achates—your Mentor—is a 'musumi'—a girl." And with that they both shrieked again; and this time, though sorely against my will, I was obliged to turn the cachinnatory duet into a trio.

But Bob was right, and I must have been blind indeed not to have found it out before. It explained so much—everything, in fact—and for a time I felt an awful fool.

Certainly, as Bob conceded, up to a certain age, the Japs, both male and female, do look uncommonly alike to a stranger's not too penetrating eye; but we had seen each other so often and for so long—had grown so intimate—that my ignorance was almost incredible; yet ignorant I had been, and I made up my mind to be well laughed at for my pains.

"But I say, look here, you know! What do you mean to do, old fellow, now that you do know, you know?" was Bob's next enquiry, when we found ourselves again alone.

"Do? How do you mean?" I repeated blankly.

"About Miss—Ohmy, or whatever her name may be."

"Why, what should I do?" I asked again stupidly.

"Oh, come, you know, this is too bad! It was all very well so long as you did not know he was a she—I mean a girl—and 'pon my word, I'm half inclined to believe you didn't; but, now that you do know all about it, don't you know?" He paused suggestively.

"Well, and what of that? Does it make any difference—really—I mean? I don't see that I am called upon to do anything. I shall leave it to—to her, in fact. We are great friends, and get along famously with each other's language, so—"

"That's all right, but just think of the mischief you may be doing. She's only quite a girl!"

"Say a child, and then you'll be nearer to the mark," I interposed, in all good faith.

"H'm! I am not so sure of that; but anyway, you must put an end to it at once!"

"Nonsense, what call have I to interfere?"

"Hang it, how stupid you are! I take it for granted you don't mean any harm."

"Certainly not," I cried, indignant once more.

"But just think of the harm you may do without meaning it. You surely don't want the girl to grow fond of you?" And Bob looked unutterable things.

"Well, I rather think she has done, don't you know," I answered in all innocence, for I could not rid myself of the pet dog or child idea of our relations all at once. And really, and in all honesty, I felt it had amounted to nothing more.

"And are you making a fool of her?"

"I think it is I who have been the fool, so far," I objected mildly, and trying to smile as I remembered my ridiculous misapprehension.

"Then take care you are no worse," was Bob's blunt rejoinder. "Remember these people are not all children, as you appear to suppose. They are men and women, like ourselves, only with a difference. And once they feel themselves slighted, or in any way aggrieved, they have no great respect for human life. Take care, then, you do not—"

"My dear fellow, what on earth have I to fear? I have told you I am not going to do anything—"

"Except get into a deuce of a row. Can't you understand that, spite of his having lowered himself by taking you as a lodger into his house, your host is by way of being something of a swell, or, at all events, he is connected with those who are very high up indeed—wearers of the double-handed sword, and all that—who, if they imagined themselves offended, would think no more of trying its edge on you than I should of lighting another cigarette." And Bob threw the old one away as he went on solemnly: "A nice mess you'll be in if some fine morning the irate and insulted father challenges you to a bout of 'hara-kiri.'"

"What in the name of mystery is that?"

"The happy despatch, the Japanese form of the duello. You would look well if Papa Ohmy were to neatly and expeditiously slit himself open before you had time to object, or even know there was anything wrong."

"Surely he would never be such a fool. And, anyway, so long as he did not practise it first on me," I was beginning, when Englefield interrupted me in all seriousness.

"Oh! he would never be guilty of such a gross impropriety—such an outrage on the law of honour. That would be left for you to do."

"You mean, seriously, that—"

"You would be expected to do the same."

We are not in France, remember. The duel may be entered into quite as lightly here, but neither party is expected, or, in fact, allowed to survive."

"Still—but what nonsense. Given that he had any cause for dissatisfaction, which, of course, is absurd, his code of honour would have nothing to do with me. I should never dream of doing anything so——"

"Disagreeable. No, perhaps not. Then you might be thankful to get away from Japan with a whole skin. Take my word for it, he has crowds of relations, any one of whom would as soon perform the operation for you as not. I would not give that for your chance of escape."

And Bob threw away the stump of another cigarette.

"But the whole thing is preposterous, absurd. Why, half an hour ago I did not even know——"

"And you expect the paternal Ohmy to swallow that? Don't you wish you may get it? I don't quite see why it has been allowed to go on for so long, but it's a form of Anglomania, no doubt. He's been bitten, and thought you were a catch. I should say clear out, and mind you don't get caught; unless, by the way, you intend—that is, have no great objection to marrying Yum-Yum—I should say Ohmy. You may have strong views as to the ultimate fusion of races, and all that. Tastes do differ, and one never knows." And the speaker shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"But my dear fellow," I urged, "have I not told you over and over again that I have no views of any kind whatsoever?"

"True, now you mention it, you have. I keep forgetting. You certainly have told me more than once already—it's a sort of 'Mary had a little lamb' affair; well, mind you don't find your way to the butcher's along with the lamb, that is all, my eccentrically platonic young friend. And look here, don't get huffy, you know; it's not the least use in the world. Besides, if I've said anything I'm sorry for, why I'm glad of it—see?" And with this truly enigmatic saying by way of apology, Englefield shook himself together preparatory to going home to his hotel. "You had far better come with me, and send for your traps to-morrow," he finished, as we shook hands.

But no, I let him go, though feeling altogether more uncomfortable than I should have cared to own.

It was perfectly true. I was both inexperienced and—yes, perhaps a fool. Any-

how I had acted as one. And if I found it so difficult to explain myself to a friend and a countryman of my own, so as to win his entire confidence and belief, why it would simply be impossible to do so to a native in a case such as Englefield had supposed; and what if my little farce were to end in a tragedy after all?

What ought I to do?

THE THIRTEENTH BRYDAIN.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefit of Clergy*," "*Mr. Wingrove's Ways*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," "*Dick's Wife*," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THEN you'll be back about six o'clock, Keith?"

"There or thereabouts, sweetheart. You are sure you won't be lonely?"

It was a bright morning, and Etrenne Brydain and her husband stood together beside the tree of the pine avenue that was nearest to the house. Brydain wore shooting dress and carried his gun. And as Etrenne answered him, she adjusted the strap of the sandwich-basket that hung from his shoulders with pretty care.

"Not the least bit," she said brightly. "Good luck to you, dear; good-bye."

And then, though the good-bye was followed by a farewell kiss, she turned and sauntered by his side down the avenue.

"How quaint and pretty the village looks this morning, Keith!" she observed. "When are you going to introduce me there, by the way?"

Brydain settled his gun on his shoulder with a light laugh.

"Well, to tell you the truth, sweetheart," he said, "I gather from Mackenzie's lugubrious demeanour that we'd better defer that introduction for a bit. The superstition of our people about here is as incredible as their frankness. The Brydain doom is a cherished spectre of theirs, and they look upon you as its instrument, and upon me as a blinded victim!"

The light died suddenly out of Etrenne's face, taking some of the colour with it, and she stopped suddenly.

"I don't think I'll come any further, Keith," she said. "Good-bye." Then, as he stooped to kiss her again, she put both arms round his neck. "Good-bye, oh, good-bye, my dear," she said, and then she turned and went back alone to the house.

Two days had passed since their arrival at the Great House; Etrenne was already at home in it. She had become familiar with the house and its rather curious domestic arrangements very quickly, extraordinarily quickly it seemed to her, since hers was by no means the familiarity of satisfaction. The weather had been very fine, and the previous day they had spent in a long walk, during which Brydain had shown her all his boyish haunts; and to-day she had persuaded him to go for a day's shooting. Since that first evening, Etrenne had not seen Marjory Mackenzie again. She had, of course, seen Mrs. Mackenzie, who had apologised profusely for the girl's appearance, and had gone on to give many anxious assurances to Etrenne that she should not be annoyed in the same way again. These she gave with not a few tears; for, in truth, poor Mrs. Mackenzie had been much disturbed by the untoward circumstance; and the trouble that had been growing upon her all the summer had to a great extent worn away her customary placidity.

Ever since Brydain's visit to his home in May, Marjory's demeanour had undergone a change—as marked as it was at first inexplicable to her mother and Mackenzie. After Brydain's departure Mrs. Mackenzie had found her daughter growing day by day more absent-minded, more forgetful, and more entirely incapable than ever; and after observing her carefully for some weeks, and growing very anxious with the observation, she had, under the pressure of her anxiety, confided her fears and wonders to her brother-in-law, half hoping that Mackenzie would ridicule them, and say contemptuously that Marjory was to him in no way altered from her usual self.

But, to her consternation, Mrs. Mackenzie found her own feelings only reflected in Mackenzie. He, too, had observed the girl keenly, he also having had his attention attracted to her by some slight incident soon after Brydain's departure; and with some hesitation, at the sight of poor Susan Mackenzie's grief, he, on receiving her confidence, said that he too had noticed a change for the worse in the girl; he had thought her unaccountably silly and unreasonable, and he added reluctantly, "daft."

Whether the combined and closer surveillance which her uncle and her mother exercised over Marjory after their confidence absolutely hastened in the girl the

crisis which was inevitable, or whether it only seemed to their anxious care that that crisis came on more rapidly, the fact is certain that it did come. It was only a week or two later that Mrs. Mackenzie and her brother-in-law had tacitly accepted as a terrible fact, to be dealt with as they best could, the truth that Marjory had lost her senses, and would never, in this world, be accountable for her actions again. Mrs. Mackenzie's eyes were dim and sunken with tears for days; and Mackenzie's grief for his brother's "lass" showed itself in an odd and awkward attention to Marjory which he never before had shown her. He would take her out with him for walks, he would patiently bear with her incomprehending talk, and he would try with an endeavour that was pathetic, both from its source and its futility, to amuse and divert the girl.

Marjory's senselessness showed itself only in very quiet ways. She would, when spoken to, stare vacantly, with a bewildered look in the great brown eyes, at the person speaking, as if she understood nothing of what was being said; and she would answer more or less incoherently. Now and then she would suddenly ask for some household work to do, and begin to help her mother in one of her own old accustomed tasks; but the work would come to an end as suddenly as it had begun; and in the midst of scrubbing the kitchen floor, perhaps, or laying the table for dinner, Marjory would turn away abruptly, leave everything just as it was, and wander out into the avenue, to walk up and down it like a restless ghost. Most of her day, indeed, was spent in wandering up and down, backwards and forwards, throughout the house and its immediate vicinity outside. Sometimes she was quite silent in her wanderings, but more often she sang to herself in a low crooning voice, and what she most often sang were the last two lines of the old rhyme concerning the Brydain doom. Sometimes her wandering would end abruptly at one of the trees in the avenue, and she would stand leaning against it for hours, staring vacantly at nothing, and apparently lost in thought. But, as Mrs. Mackenzie had assured Etrenne, she was perfectly harmless.

Etrenne had to some extent recovered from the strange impression she had received on that first evening. But she could not, reason against it as she would, get rid wholly of the sense of oppression which had come to her then. It was

considerably lighter, and it grew lighter still with the sight of the evident content and happiness her husband felt in being in his own home, but it did not leave her; it hung over her like a shadow, not in itself very heavy, but heavy enough to dim the sunshine where it fell.

All around her was a vague and wholly undefined atmosphere of horror, sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger, but always present, and telling on her nerves more than she cared to acknowledge to herself.

The sense of oppression showed itself plainly on her face now, as she walked slowly up the avenue alone, after parting with Brydain. She looked straight before her as she walked, and she was all unconscious that she was being watched by a pair of wide, wild brown eyes. From behind a tree, Marjory had watched with a concentration weird in its intensity the parting between Etenne and Brydain, and when Brydain was gone, Marjory concentrated the same intent gaze on Etenne. Following her every step with her eyes, she waited until Etenne was a little in advance, and then, stealing out from her hiding-place, followed her up the avenue with noiseless, creeping tread.

Etenne, on gaining the house, turned her steps to the library, where she had left her work. She did not much like the great dining-room, and after the first evening she had scarcely entered it. This morning, feeling the autumn air chilly, she had asked for a fire after breakfast, and it was sparkling and crackling brightly now, as she re-entered the room, giving the old library a used and cheery appearance.

She had left her work on a table under one of the windows, and she crossed the room to get it. But as she took it up a disinclination to go on with it took possession of her, and she folded it up, and turned to the glass bookcase standing between the windows—the one that held the novels. She had just chosen an inviting-looking yellow-backed novel, and was turning away to settle herself down by the fire with it, when a sudden uneasy sense as of the presence of some one else near her made her catch quickly at the bookcase door. It was, however, she told herself a moment later, just one of the fancies to which the old house gave rise. She shut the door firmly and moved away. As she turned her face, she started violently. In a corner by the door, her slight figure pressed into an incredibly small space, her

head bent forward, watching Etenne with fixed, devouring brown eyes, was Marjory.

Etenne shuddered sharply. The sight of the girl seemed to bring back at once all the terror of that first evening, and an unaccountable feeling of fear and dread that turned her sick and faint. She caught at the table for support. She was not actually afraid of Marjory; she did not connect the feeling definitely with the girl's personality, but she did not like her presence; she did not like the sensation of being watched by her, and another shudder ran through her as she sat down, and turning to Marjory, tried to speak. Etenne was very sorry and pitiful towards her, and wanted to show her this.

"Marjory," she said gently, though with a third irrepressible shudder, "did you want me?"

But Marjory did not speak. She slowly took her eyes from Etenne, and then, without a word, went singing out of the room.

Etenne, left alone, looked nervously around her, and then rose and shut the door. She came back to her easy-chair and took up her book again, but she could not read. On the page, in the sparkling fire, everywhere she looked was that white, thin face, and wide staring brown eyes. She shook from head to foot for a moment. Then she stood up resolutely, and throwing down her book, determined that she would go out of doors for a walk, and get rid, if possible, of the haunting impression the sight of the girl had left.

She ran upstairs quickly, to come down again a few moments later in her hat and jacket. A very pretty picture she made in her trim walking dress as she set out with a quick step along the avenue. At every step her spirits rose under the influence of the bright, fresh morning air and sunlight, and at every step the impression of Marjory's face and the pressure of the indefinable shadow grew fainter and lighter, until at the end of the pine avenue she could have laughed aloud from sheer reaction of spirits. She had set out without the least decision as to her destination, and at the end of the avenue she paused wonderingly for a moment. As she considered, the sun caught the red roof of a house in the village, and suddenly her words to her husband flashed back into her mind. It seemed to her that those words showed her exactly what she wanted to do. In her light-hearted, excited frame of mind, she thought suddenly

that it would be "great fun," as she expressed it to herself, to go into Brydain village all by herself, and to make the acquaintance of the village people, as it were, in spite of themselves and unaided by her husband. It would be delightful, she thought, to tell him afterwards that she had taken their prejudices by storm. For with great faith in their attachment to him, and a little very pardonable belief in her own attractions, Etrenne never doubted that they would, in spite of Keith's words, give her a ready welcome.

Five minutes' sharp walking brought her to the entrance of the village. She could see distinctly that there were groups of people scattered here and there in the street. It was twelve o'clock—always a cheery, sociable hour, for the women, with a refreshing sense of having got through the hardest part of the day's work, generally came to their doors at noon, when it was fine, to loiter, and gossip, and comment to each other on the doings of the children who came trooping home from school or played in the street. Etrenne thought she could hardly have chosen a better time. She came towards the nearest group with a smile on her face and a greeting on her lips. As she approached she became aware of an intent stare from the women composing it. This she was prepared for, and her pretty cordial smile only deepened; but she was not prepared for what followed. The foremost woman turned abruptly round as Etrenne reached speaking distance, and catching up the child clinging to her skirts, went towards her own cottage, entered, and shut the door. The other members of the group followed her example with one consent. Etrenne very nearly stood still in her amazement at this proceeding; but she rallied herself quickly and went briskly on, though with a cold sense of chill creeping over her, cheerily intending to begin conversation with the very next person she met. But there was no such individual.

As if Etrenne's coming had been the signal of an approaching storm, all the women in the street retreated before her, and calling their children, hurried into their own homes, and as the first woman had done, shut the door. By the time poor Etrenne, frightened and hurt, had reached the end of the street, there was not a human being visible in it. As she turned, pale and trembling, to retrace her steps, it seemed to her tear-blinded eyes that it looked exactly as it had done on

the night of her arrival. Even the fact of the sunlight made no difference; the very sun looked cold and forbidding now.

Hurrying home with a very different step from that cheery haste of half an hour ago, she stumbled among the rough stones of the road, and finally, exhausted and wretched with her disappointment, she leant against the doorway of the Great House for support before going in. The door was open, as it usually was on a fine day. From within came a low, murmuring sound. At first, Etrenne was too confused to notice it; but as her senses reassorted themselves, she became aware that it was Marjory's voice, and she was singing:

For the thirteenth this doom shall wait,
He shall win the bride who brings his fate.

The words floated to Etrenne's ears. With a tremendous effort she dragged herself across the threshold. There was no sign of the girl, only the low monotonous words, repeated over and over again, filled the air, it seemed to Etrenne. Gathering all her forces, she crossed the hall into the library with a sort of terrified rush. There, in the chair in which she herself had been sitting, was Marjory, rocking herself backwards and forwards as she sang.

Six hours later Brydain, coming home from his long day's shooting, went upstairs in search of his wife, whom he had failed to find in either of the rooms downstairs. He opened the door of their room and uttered a little exclamation of surprise at finding it, by comparison with its usual comparative sombreness, a blaze of light. Everywhere where candles could be placed they were placed and lighted, and a large fire was blazing.

"What an illumination!" he said laughingly, and he stopped short as Etrenne slowly rose from the large chair in which she had been half hidden. A wan little smile trembled on her lips. She was evidently making a desperate effort to appear as usual, but her face was deadly pale, and she trembled from head to foot. "Sweetheart!" he cried anxiously as he caught her in his arms, "sweetheart, what is it?"

For the second time since her arrival in the Great House of Brydain—for hardly more than the second time since she had been a little child—Etrenne broke down with sobs and tears, the irrepressible sobs and tears of overstrung nerves.

"Oh, Keith!" she said, "I didn't mean to tell you—I didn't mean to disappoint

you; but I'm frightened here — I'm frightened! Take me away!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ETRENNE BRYDAIN sat before the fire in the dining-room at the Great House with some needlework in her hands; she was very pale, and there were dark shadows under her eyes, but there was a curiously relieved expression about her whole face.

The collapse of the night before had first amazed and then distressed her husband inexpressibly. Filled with remorse and self-reproach, which left no room for either wonder or question, he had wanted to take her away from Brydain there and then.

"We needn't stay another hour, sweetheart," he cried; "not another hour."

And he had actually fetched his "Bradshaw," and looked out the very next train by which they could leave Carfrae.

But Etrenne—brought gradually back from the mysterious gulf of terror into which she had fallen by his voice and his presence, and soothed and reassured by the ease with which escape from Brydain was by his words invested—had grown calmer as he grew more insistent. She did not want to go that moment, she said with a tremulous little smile; to-morrow would do, or even Wednesday. She did not want, she finally declared, to go before Wednesday; only — and here she drew her husband's arm a little more closely round her—she would like, if he would not be very disappointed, to go then. And this point settled, with impetuous eagerness on his side, half the load of oppression which had brought it about seemed suddenly to vanish from Etrenne. The thought that she could get away from it at any moment seemed to deprive Brydain of half its terrors; the thought that in thirty-six hours she would actually leave it behind her, so raised her spirits that those intervening hours seemed to her merely an interlude easily to be faced.

With this feeling in her mind, and with some self-reproach at the thought that she was taking her husband away, she had pressed Brydain to go out for a last day's shooting. This Brydain had, at first, flatly refused to do. He would not leave her alone again, he declared—nothing should induce him to do so.

But Etrenne, fortified by the sense that every hour was bringing nearer her departure from Brydain, and her return to

cheerful accustomed ways and habits in London, had begged and prayed, and finally commanded with pretty peremptoriness, telling him that if he refused she should for ever reproach herself with having spoilt his holiday. And he had finally yielded to her insistence. Etrenne said good-bye to him on the doorstep with a smiling face, and then ran upstairs and began to collect her possessions in readiness to be packed for their journey. Her spirits rose higher and her heart grew lighter as her occupation emphasized for her the fact that she should so soon be gone. The oppression and the horror had receded so far, as the thought of London drew nearer, that they had almost left her. She almost wondered how she could ever have been so frightened, and was half ready to laugh at herself for her fears.

Mrs. Mackenzie followed her upstairs to offer her assistance in packing up, and to express voluble regret at their departure, and tentative and anxious hopes that she had found Marjory no annoyance.

"The poor child's clearer-headed a bit to-day," her mother said. "It's wonderful how her senses comes and goes like." She paused a minute and then added: "She's very much took up with you, ma'am. I've not seen her take so much interest in no one since she went off her head."

Etrenne smiled kindly. In her security she could think pityingly of Marjory's affliction.

"Poor girl!" she said gently. "She may get better, Mrs. Mackenzie."

And then she went downstairs, and as she went there floated along a distant passage the same low sound of singing that had so shaken her yesterday. But half of the thirty-six hours had gone, and Etrenne did not change colour, though she shivered slightly. "Poor girl!" she said to herself again. "Poor child!"

And now, at five o'clock in the afternoon, several hours more had worn themselves away, and Etrenne, sitting in the dining-room beginning to expect Brydain's arrival, was almost happy. She had not been into the library that day. She had passed its door each time with a little shudder, and had established herself in the dining-room, though she disliked it, without a thought of any alternative.

She had done a long piece of her embroidery, and as she stretched it out on her knee to look at it, she glanced up at the clock. She saw that it was just past five, and she rose and walked to the window to

look out for Brydain. There was no sign of his coming, and as she stood there looking out, she heard a sound behind her and turned with a start, all the horror which had receded from her closing suddenly round her again.

She saw that it was Marjory; but the girl was standing in the doorway carrying a little tray, on which stood a coffee-cup. But for the moment Etrenne could gain no hold upon herself; she could neither move nor speak. Then, with a sudden and violent rush of reaction, sudden sweeping condemnation of herself as very silly, she moved, and bent forward kindly to the girl.

"Have you brought me some tea, Marjory?" she said; "that is very kind of you. Oh, no; it is coffee, isn't it? Thank you; thank you very much."

Without a word, but with her brown eyes steadily fixed on Etrenne, Marjory nodded, and putting the little tray into the hand Etrenne extended for it, turned and left the room.

Etrenne turned with the tray in her hand, set it down on the table, and stood looking at it. Then she gave herself a little shake, apparently a physical expression of a mental process.

"It's abominable of me!" she cried half aloud, "to feel so horrid about her. It would hurt her feelings dreadfully if I didn't drink it."

She paused another moment, and then put out her hand quickly towards the cup; she was just lifting it to her lips when the door opened quickly to admit Brydain.

Etrenne put down the cup with a little exclamation of welcome as he came up to her and kissed her.

"All right to-day, my darling?" he said, looking at her anxiously. She smiled up at him brightly and reassuringly.

"Quite right, dear," she said. "This time to-morrow we shall be back in London. I had no idea I was such a dreadful cockney, Keith!" she ended, with a little laugh.

He echoed it gaily, and walking up to the fireplace threw himself down in one of the arm-chairs, and let his head rest against the back. It happened to be the same chair on which he was sitting on that long-past evening when he had first told Mackenzie of his intention to leave Brydain. Even now Brydain very seldom sat in the chair that had been his father's.

Etrenne, looking at him, thought fondly how handsome he was. She also thought

that he looked a little tired. The blue line on his forehead was standing out with peculiar distinctness.

"Are you tired, Keith?" she said.

"Not a bit!" he answered cheerily, "only awfully thirsty! What do you think of some tea?"

"I'll order it!" said Etrenne. And she was turning towards the door to carry out her intention when her eyes fell on the coffee-cup standing on the table.

"Here's a cup of coffee waiting for you, Keith," she exclaimed. "Marjory brought it to me just now. Poor child, I suppose she had some vague idea of being attentive. I'm not thirsty, and I don't want to hurt her feelings; do drink it for me." She took the cup from the table as she spoke. "Milk?" she said interrogatively, taking in her other hand the little milk-jug from the tray.

Brydain laughed.

"Well, I don't know that coffee, black or otherwise, is just the thing to quench a man's thirst; but if you're anxious to have it disposed of, Etrenne, I don't mind drinking it. And I'll drink it black, thanks."

She turned and carried the cup across the room to him where he sat. He took it from her hand, and as he did so she stooped and kissed him.

"That's very good of you!" she said lightly. "And now I'll go and order you as much tea as you like, and then I shall go straight upstairs and finish packing up. You'll come when you've had your tea, won't you? You may bring me some, if you like."

He held her for a moment more, pulling her face down to kiss him again. And then he followed her with his eyes as she left the room.

The door closed behind her. Brydain lifted the coffee-cup to his lips, and drank its contents at a draught.

"I'm sair fashed to have kept you so long without your tea, Brydain. Susan Mackenzie let the fire die, and the kettle was long in boiling."

It was Mackenzie who spoke, and he came round the end of the table as he did so, having there set down the tea that Etrenne had ordered for her husband. From where he stood only the outline of Brydain's figure was visible, in the autumn dusk, half sitting, half lying in the chair in which Etrenne had left him.

Brydain did not answer. "Brydain,"

Mackenzie said with a note of interrogation in his voice, "Brydain, will ye no take your tea?" Still there was no answer.

"Brydain!" Mackenzie repeated his summons in a rather higher key. The figure in the chair neither moved nor spoke, and the old man drew a step or two nearer, and looked anxiously into his face, sharply outlined against the dark background on which it rested. "Brydain!" he cried again, and the interrogation in his voice had given place to fear. "Brydain! what ails ye, man? Speak to me, man!" He stretched out a trembling hand as he spoke and laid it on the shoulder of the man who was dearer to his old heart than anything else on earth, shaking it wildly in the horror that was overwhelming him. "Speak to me, laddie!" he cried wildly, "speak to me!"

But Keith Brydain would never speak again in this world. That white, still face would never change, the blue eyes never smile any more. He lay back in the chair cold and dead. Here, in his own home, in the very room where he had declared his disbelief in it, long ago, the doom that had pursued him with sure, unflinching step, had reached him at last.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DOUBT or mystery as to how the tragedy of Brydain's death had come about there was none. No sooner was it too late to avert the catastrophe than the course of events which had led to it presented themselves with the terrible distinctness that only comes when comprehension is of no avail. The feeling in Marjory that Mrs. Mackenzie had spoken of as her "interest" in Etrenne showed itself, when it was too late, as an intense hatred—a hatred that seemed to her heartbroken uncle and mother utterly unfounded and crazy. The cup of coffee that Marjory had carried to Etrenne without her mother's knowledge, and which Etrenne had given to her husband, had contained what must have been a large quantity of laudanum. The laudanum

had been given to Mrs. Mackenzie by the Carfrae doctor whom she had consulted on the subject of the sleeplessness which was one of Marjory's symptoms. And some vague remembrance of the warning given in her hearing, at the same time, as to its powers, must have imprinted itself on the girl's uncertain brain.

Such were the facts as they seemed to every one connected with them. And in the main they were right. But the thread on which they were strung, the clue that gave them their true significance, was never known to any one on earth.

As Marjory's mental power failed, one all-dominating idea remained with her, growing stronger as all else grew weaker—the idea of Brydain and his doom. To avert that doom, to save him from the wife who was to bring it upon him, was the ruling impulse of her life. For her unhinged mind right and wrong were not. Etrenne was to her only a malignant influence in Brydain's life, to be removed from it at any cost.

But it was not to be. The very action that should have saved Brydain, that should have frustrated the doom for ever, was turned to its fulfilment. The weird that had been waiting for Brydain and Etrenne for nearly three hundred years was dreed to the very end.

Whether its consummation was also the consummation of a series of undesigned coincidences; whether it was indeed the fulfilment of the old law that visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; or whether something lay behind greater and more mysterious still, who shall say?

Etrenne, in her heartbroken widowhood, asked herself these questions, and turned from them with a shuddering awe. Tredennis, in the desolation of his broken friendship, thought of them long and deeply; but his thoughts only brought him to recognise, as all men must, at some period of their lives, that there are problems for the solution of which they must wait.

For the prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. Keith, the thirteenth Brydain, was the last of his race and name.

ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT.

For particulars respecting Advertisement Spaces, address THE ADVERTISING MANAGER of "All the Year Round," No. 168, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.